

DETERMINANTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND SELF-ESTEEM IN MARRIED AND UNMARRIED WOMEN

Muhammad Azam Tahir

Department of Psychology, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study aims at exploring the difference between married and unmarried women on the variable of psychological well-being and self esteem and to study these determinants among married women in the cultural perspective of Pakistan. Thus it was hypothesized that there would be a lower level of self-esteem and psychological well-being among unmarried women as compared to married women. Secondly demographic variables will bring some variation on the level of self-esteem and psychological well-being in married women.

Research Design: A Comparative study.

Place and Duration of study: Province of Punjab, Pakistan cities Faisalabad, Bahawalpur, Rawalpindi, and Lahore during January 2009 to September 2009.

Sample and Method: A sample of 200 women was included in the study using purposive convenient sampling technique. Their age range was between 20 to 50 years. Psychological Well Being Scale (CPI) by © Gough was used to measure the degree of psychological well-being. Dichotomous scoring 0-1 in response category was used for CPI. Index of Self-Esteem (ISE) by © Hudson was applied to test the self-esteem of women.

Results: The findings revealed remained consistent to the previous results of research conducted on psychological well-being and self-esteem. Demographic variables like age, education and occupation laid no significant effect on women's psychological well-being and self esteem. The findings suggest that only the marital status of the women can affect the self esteem of the women though no significant effects of marital stats were found on Psychological wellbeing of women.

Conclusion: Research concludes with that cultural differences are always there and they affect more in comparison to personal circumstances.

Key Words: Psychological well being; self esteem; culture; women

INTRODUCTION

Recently, psychological well-being is the prime focus of research in social sciences^{1,2,3,4} etc. Psychological well-being exists within the experience of the individual. It is individual's evaluative reaction towards his/her life - either in terms of life satisfaction - Cognitive evaluations or affects - ongoing emotional reactions. However, it has been noted that little attention has been paid to the predictor of psychological well-being that vary in diverse cultures as the variables that influence evaluations, vary across cultures⁵. The concept of well-being initially has emerged in the discipline of health and it was used identical with healthfulness, quite early in 1947. Crisp⁶ described well-being in the manners of 'Happiness' in ordinary life. It is also a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his/her life. These evaluations include emotional reactions to events as well as cognitive judgments of satisfaction. The positive experiences embodied in high psychological well-being are a core concept of positive psychology because they make life worthwhile and the life events can

¹Lachman, M. E. & Weaver, S. L. (1998). The sense of control as a moderator of social class differences in health and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 763–773.

²Headey, B. & Wearing, A. (1989). Personality, life-events, and subjective well-being: a dynamic equilibrium model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 731–739.

³Staudinger, U., Fleeson, W. & Baltes, P. B. (1999). Predictors of subjective physical health and global wellbeing: similarities and differences between the United States and Germany. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 305–319.

⁴Suh, E., Diener, E. & Fujita, F. (1996). Events and subjective well-being: only recent events matter. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70, 1091–1102.

⁵Diener, E., Gohm, C. L., Suh, M., & Oishi, S. (2000). Similarity of the relation between marital status and subjective well-being across cultures. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 31, 419 – 436.

⁶Crisp, R. (2001). *Well-being*. Oxford: Oxford university press. New York.

influence psychological well-being⁷. Diener et al.,⁸ found that steadiness in psychological well-being was comparable among people whose income level went under variation over 10 years. The positive effects of marriage on a person's well-being and physical health have been reported at length^{9,10,11,12,13}.

Research persistently has revealed that as compared to the unmarried, married come across greater well-being on a variety of life events and features. Better happiness and well-being, extra satisfaction of emotions with partners, and improved sex lives. These variations have been reported not only in the United States but also in other developed nations as well^{14,15,16}. Diener & Fujita¹⁷

⁷ Headey, B., & Wearing, A. (1989). Personality, life-events and subjective well-being: a dynamic equilibrium model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 731–739.

⁸ Diener, E., Sapyta, J. J., & Suh, E. (1998). Subjective well-being is essential to well-being. *Psychological Inquiry*, 9, 33–37.

⁹ Ross, C. E., Mirowsky, J., & Goldsteen, K. (1990). The impact of the family on health. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52, 1059 – 1078.

¹⁰ Barrett, A. E. (2000). Marital trajectories and mental health. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 41, 451 – 464.

¹¹ Joung, I. M. A., Van de Mheen, H., Stronks, K., Van Poppel, F. W. A., & Mackenbach, J. P. (1998). A longitudinal study of health selection in marital transitions. *Social Science and Medicine*, 46, 425 – 435.

¹² Marks, N. F., & Lambert, J. D. (1998). Marital status continuity and change among young and midlife adults. *Journal of Family Issues*, 19, 652 – 686.

¹³ Williams, K., & Umberson, D. (2004). Marital status, marital transitions, and health: A gendered life course perspective. *Journal Health and Social Behavior*, 45(1), 81 – 98.

¹⁴ Burman, B., & Margolin, G. (1992). Analysis of the association between marital relationships and health problems: An interactional perspective. *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol 112(1), 39-63.

¹⁵ Hirschl, T. A., Altobelli, J., & Rank, M. R. (2003). Does marriage increase the odds of affluence? Exploring the life course probabilities. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65, 927 – 938.

6 Tahir

reviewed that both personality and demographic factors correlate with psychological well-being. They further added that the happy person remains young, healthy, well educated, with a wide range of intelligence.

Results revealed that Psychological well-being proved to be less strongly related with life satisfaction¹⁸, while extraversion was low on association with pleasant affect¹⁹, in collectivist cultures in comparison to individualistic cultures. Similarly, Suh et al.,⁴ found that collectivists are less harmonious than individualists, and that harmony is less strongly related to psychological well-being among collectivists.

Diener et al.,⁸ found that unmarried couples who lived together looked happier than married in Individualistic cultures. Results suggested that in Individualistic cultures to be a companion is more important than social endorsement. However, it was vice versa in collectivist cultures. It also means in these cultures that social approval is more significant than the advantages of marriage. Consequently, cultural norms may change the correlates of psychological well-being⁸.

Studies have explored the impact of gender on the relationship between employment and women's well-being and reported that working women, generally, had more moderate attitudes than un-employed, while the high level of

¹⁶ Ross, C. E., Mirowsky, J., & Goldsteen, K. (1990). The impact of the family on health. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52, 1059 – 1078.

¹⁷ Diener, E., & Fujita, F. (1995). Resources, personal strivings, and subjective well-being: a homothetic and idiographic approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 68, 926–935.

¹⁸ Diener, E., & Diener, M. (1995). Cross-cultural correlates of life-satisfaction and self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68, 653–663.

¹⁹ Diener, E. & Emmons, R. A. (1984). The independence of positive & negative affect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47, 1105-1117.

openhandedness in gender role attitudes remained to be linked with greater well-being among working women²⁰.

Self-esteem is a discrete but an important constituent of the self-concept; it corresponds to the affective as well as evaluative part of the self^{21,22} and a part of self which willingly varies, unlike the more constant self-concept²³. Andrews²⁴ opined that a universal common sense of self-esteem is derivative from assessments of aptitude or accomplishment in the field of personal significance, with a success in fields which are of least importance to oneself, bearing less impact on comprehensive self-esteem. As of junior throughout to high school, self-esteem is constantly lesser for girls than for boys (e.g., Rigby & Slee²⁵). Self esteem might be classified among positive and negative. Findings propose that women recognize alike provisions from their other better half and associates, while men might not. There is a significant relationship between friendship quality and marital adjustment to self-esteem for both the sexes. Though women emerge more sensitive to divergence in marriages, the disadvantageous effect of

²⁰ Parry, G. (1987). Paid employment & women's self-esteem. *Psychological Bulletin*, 91, 498-516.

²¹ Blyth, D., & Traeger, C. (1983). The self-concept of self-esteem in early adolescents. *Theory into Practice*, 22, 91-97.

²² Hancock, S., & Sharp, S. (1985). Educational achievement and self-esteem in a maximum security prison program. *Jail Offender Rehabilitation*, 20:21-33.

²³ Calhoun, G., & Morse, W. (1977). Self-concept and self-esteem: another perspective. *Psychology Schools*, 14, 318-322.

²⁴ Andrews, B. (1998). State of the art: self-esteem. *The Psychologist*, 11, 339-342.

²⁵ Rigby, K. & Slee, P. T. (1991). Bullying among Australian school children: reported behavior and attitudes towards victims. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 131, 615-627.

8 Tahir

disagreement on self-esteem remained similar for both men and women²⁶.

Keeping in view the review of literature in Psychological well-being & Self-esteem, the present research aims to explore both self-esteem and psychological well-being in the cultural context of Pakistan. Keeping in view the significance of marital status this study aspires on satisfying the following objectives.

- To study the level of self-esteem and psychological well-being among married and unmarried women.
- To study the effect of other demographic variables on self-esteem and psychological well-being in married women.

Thus it was hypothesized that 1). There would be a lower level of self-esteem and psychological well-being among unmarried women as compared to married women. 2). Demographic variables will bring some variation on the level of self-esteem and psychological well-being in married women.

METHOD

Sample

A purposive convenient sampling technique was used in this research. And the sample consisted of 200 women (100 married and 100 unmarried) taken from different cities of the province of Punjab, Pakistan including Faisalabad (N=25), Bahawalpur (N=26), Rawalpindi (N=24), Lahore (N=25) on each segment. Their age range was between 20 to 50 years. The criterion for selection of the sample was that only those females who were present at the time of study and who were willing to participate.

Measures

Psychological well-being scale (CPI)

The scale of psychological well-being (CPI) developed by © Ghough²⁷ comprised of 38 items was used to measure psychological well being. The scale

²⁶ Headey, B. & Wearing, A. (1989). Personality, life-events, and subjective well-being: a dynamic equilibrium model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 731–739.

consists of negative (Item No. 6,9,10,12,15,19,27,33) and rest items are positive items. The score of the subject on different categories of psychological well-being was the sum of the score on each item of the scale. The cut off point determined on the basis of percentile analysis on psychological well-being. Dichotomous scoring in the female of 0-1 response category was used 'true' response were assigned score of '1' whereas, 'False' responses were scored as '0', high score represent high psychological well being on the scale. Very low score (raw scores 20 or below) raise the possibility of exaggerated or unwanted emphasis on personal problems and even a deliberate attempt to take bad. Within range of 20-38 raw score, in interpretation is permissible.

The alpha reliability of Scale for Psychological Well-Being for the indigenous population was found to be ($\alpha=0.71$).

Index of self esteem (ISE)

ISE, to measure the degree, severity or magnitude of the problem, was developed by ©Hudson²⁸ comprises of 25 items. It is a 5 point Likert typed rating scale consisting of positive as well as negative items. Item number 3,4,5,6,7,14,15,18,21,22,23, and 25 are positive and item number 1,2,8,9,10,11,12,13,16,17,19,20,24 are negative. Score assigned to these categories ranged from 1 to 5. The high score on the index of self-esteem indicated that the women had a low sense of self-esteem. The alpha reliability of Index of Self Esteem for the indigenous population was found to be ($\alpha=0.77$).

Procedure

A separately designed demographic information sheet regarding name, age, religion, education, occupation, source of income and marital status was also administered to the respondents. They were asked to respond to all the scale items according to the given instructions.

²⁷ Gough, H. G. (1957). *Manual for the California Psychological Inventory*. Palo Alto, Calif.: Consulting Psychologists Press.

²⁸ Hudson, W. W. (1982). *The clinical measurement package: a field manual*. Homewood, Ill: Dorsey Press, New York.

Statistical Analysis

To compare the psychological well being and self- esteem among married and unmarried women, Descriptive statistics was used. Independent samples t-test was used for rest of the statistical analysis of the data using SPSS for Windows.

RESULTS

Table 1
Difference in level of Self esteem and Psychological Wellbeing between married and unmarried women (200)

Variables	Groups	N	M	SD	t-value
Self esteem	Married	100	66.1600	9.8423	2.098*
	Unmarried	100	70.5400	11.0013	
Psychological well being	Married	100	19.3600	5.6197	-0.682
	Unmarried	100	20.1000	5.2186	

Table 2
Difference in level of Psychological Wellbeing across various demographic variables in married women

Groups	N	M	SD	t-value
High Socio-economic status	42	21.1250	4.73940	
Low Socio-economic status	58	27.9630	6.98064	1.277
Working	54	27.0385	4.3861	
Non Working	46	23.6087	6.5764	0.905
Educated	64	32.5000	5.50659	
Un-educated	36	18.6111	7.0555	0.495
Age > 35 years	62	16.0000	5.7008	
Age < 35 years	38	18.5714	7.5714	1.015

Table 3
Difference in level of Self esteem across various demographic variables in married women

Groups	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>
High Socio-economic Status	46	68.6522	10.666	-0.996
Low Socio-economic Status	52	18.6087	10.6595	
Working Women	52	69.5185	11.0918	-0.837
Non-Working Women	48	2.0385	10.8091	
Educated	64	2.0800	2.0482	1.182
Un-educated	36	68.055	9.3712	
Age > 35 years	48	0.2083	0.5087	
Age < 35 Years	52	68.1154	8.1154	0.566

DISCUSSION

The present research analyzes the psychological well-being assuming that the predictor of psychological well-being may vary across cultures on married and un-married women in Pakistan. While it was reviewed that people who are successful in attending frequent positive affect remain happy. Self-esteem is well-matched with modesty.

While having a synoptic view of the results it is concluded that the 1st question was related to the psychological well-being on high and low socio-economic status of married women. It was thought that the life of well-off married women is more satisfied and relaxed in comparison to less well-off married women. The results yielded remained consistent to previous research on psychological well-being in both within-nation; and across-nation analyses; however, at both the individual and the group level, income status over time has little net effect on psychological well-being²⁹. The findings do not support the question. It is because of the cultural differences of Pakistani culture in comparison to other developed cultures.

²⁹ Diener, E. (1998). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 95, 542–575.

As regards the level of psychological well-being among working and non-working women, available research recommends that the psychological well-being of working women remains high in contrast to non-working women since working women are more independent than non-working women. The findings of this research do not support the idea. It may be argued that they may be under more burdens in Pakistani culture. So the results dictate that psychological well-being is not affected by the profession of the women.

Diener et al.⁸ found that although pleasant affect declined across age cohorts, life satisfaction and unpleasant affect showed little change. Campbell & Lavallee³⁰ found that sex differences in psychological well-being remained slighter in women reporting greater unpleasant and pleasant. However, the present findings do not support previous results. According to present findings, age does not affect the psychological well-being of the married women in Pakistani culture. Present research also viewed that the psychological well-being has strong relationship with the qualifications of the married women. Nevertheless, present findings do not support the results as according to the Pakistani culture, education of the women is not appreciated much.

It was earlier established that psychological well-being among married women portrays higher as compared the unmarried women. Nevertheless, present finding did not support the idea. Results of the US Bureau of the Census³¹ confirmed the strong effects of marital status on psychological well-being, supporting the protection perspective. The findings generally did not vary by gender not supporting the question because mostly in Pakistani culture women are not satisfied with their married life.

Results also suggested that the self-esteem of high income married women is higher as compared to low socio-economic status married women. These findings did not remain consistent to the previous research results on self-

³⁰ Campbell, J. D., & Lavallee, L. F. (1993). Who am I? The role of self-concept confusion in understanding the behavior of people with low self-esteem. In: Baumeister RF, editor. *Self-esteem: the puzzle of low self-regard*. New York: Plenum Press. 3–20.

³¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census (1996). *Selected social characteristics of the population, by sex, region, and race*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

esteem on the high and low socio- economic status of married women. It looks that this trend is due to the fact that the income of the Pakistani women is spent not on her but on their children and household. Though women earn money here yet they have least rights to spend it on themselves.

It was hypothesized that the self-esteem of working women would be quite high in comparison to non working women. However, present findings did not support the assumption. At it's the extreme, the deprived situation for an individual is one's incapability to care social relationships, situational actions or individuals; feelings, that lead to an individual personal state of puzzlement, confusion, insufficiency and anxiety³².

Similarly, the question related to the education of the married women was supported with the idea that educated women have higher level of self-esteem as compared to uneducated women. Unfortunately, our finding does not support the idea. Earlier research done looked not at some "global" measure of self-esteem but at something more specific like academic self-esteem or even self-esteem regarding the ability to succeed at a particular subjective. The concept of self-esteem grows more empirically when we use the term and when we try to devise programs to enhance children's self-esteem³³. Regarding the relationship of the self-esteem and age of the married women viewed that the age of the women below 35 years have higher level of self-esteem as compared to the women with an age above 35 years. But the present research does not support the idea because in Pakistani culture mostly responsibilities occur in very early age. So, most of the women at the age of below 35 have low self-esteem.

Final variable was related to the relationship of self-esteem and the marital status. It is viewed that the married women mostly have higher level of self-esteem as compared to the unmarried women. The present findings support the hypothesis. Because married women have strong support of her husband, most married women are financially more satisfied and completely settled in their homes as compare to the unmarried women.

³² Headey, B., & Wearing, A. (1989). Personality, life-events, and subjective well-being: a dynamic equilibrium model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 731-739.

³³ Robert, A. B. (1992). *Social psychology* (4th ed). New York. The Guilford Press.

Conclusion

It is concluded from the present study that women in Pakistan have psychological-wellbeing and self esteem problems. Personal variables like age, education, marital status and occupation did not lay significant effect on women's psychological well-being and self esteem. Educated women and uneducated women have same level of psychological well-being and self esteem. The same is the case with working and non-working women.

Limitations & Suggestions

The sample used in the present research is not large enough to generalize countrywide. Unwillingness of the respondents to participate in the present research because of the sensitivity of the issue psychological well-being and self esteem among married and unmarried women, proved to be another limitation for taking representative sample.

In the light of limitations and across the wide implications of present research, it is suggested that more research should be carried out with a larger sample representing the other provinces of the country. A broad based awareness of psychological well being and self esteem may be raised at country level.